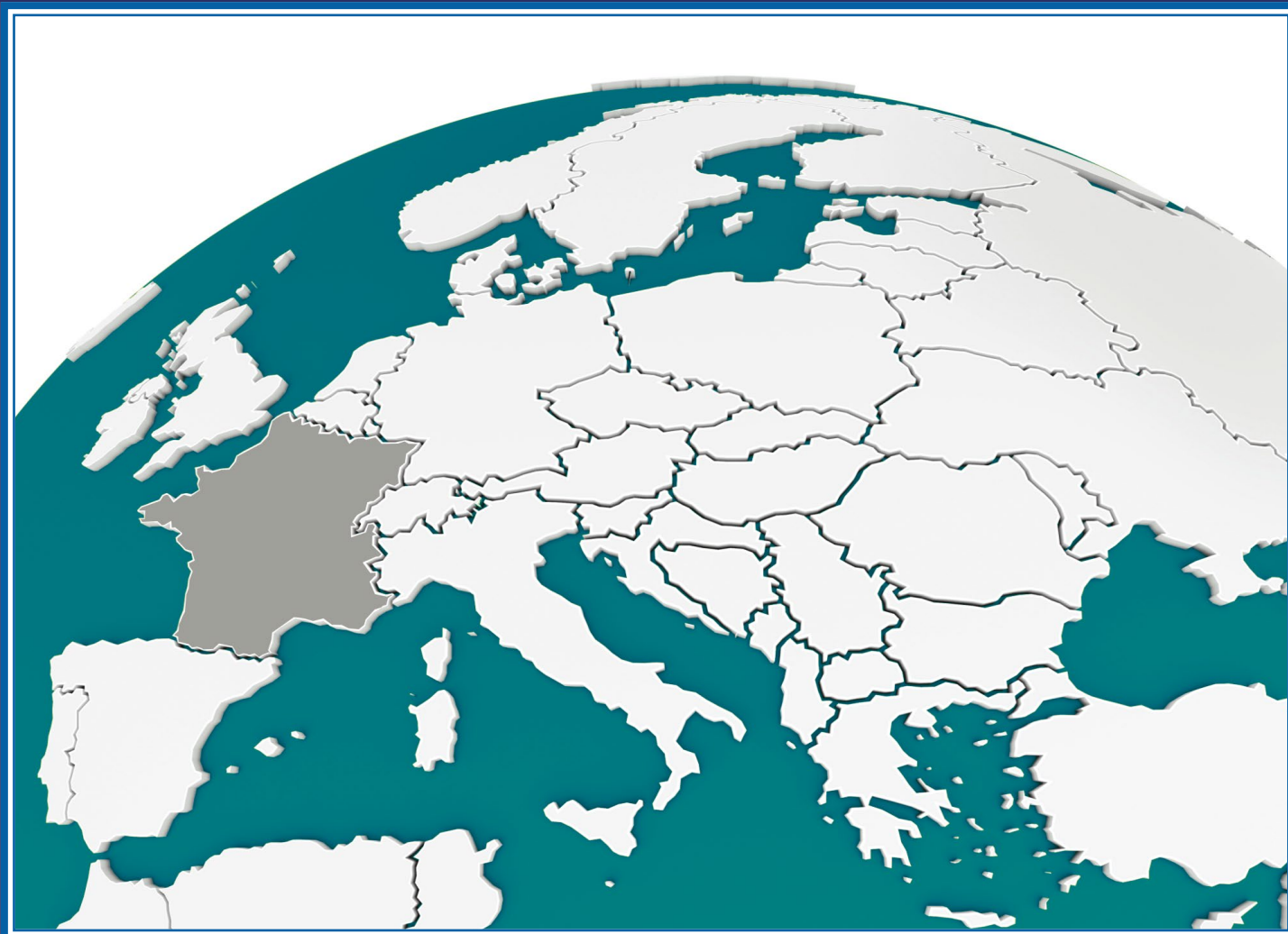


# SLOW MOTION THE LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION OF NEW IMMIGRANTS IN FRANCE

By Patrick Simon and Elsa Steichen



**A Series on The Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Europe:  
Employment Trajectories**



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THE EUROPEAN UNION



# **SLOW MOTION**

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May 2014



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by the European Union



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## Executive Summary

France's labor market can be hostile to new entrants, whether recently arrived immigrants or young people seeking their first jobs. Restrictions on foreign nationals working in the public sector, stringent requirements for certain jobs, and occupational ladders that are difficult to penetrate at later points together effectively cut off many jobs to newly arrived immigrants. Meanwhile, the fact that France has significantly larger proportions of family-driven migration than labor migration has meant that the new arrivals, by virtue of not having been selected because of their skills, often have low educational attainment, which can put them at risk of unemployment.

An analysis of the French Labor Force Survey reveals that immigrants who arrived from 2000 onwards fared badly in the first few years after arrival, but improved their labor market outcomes over time. A year after arrival, only about half of immigrants were active in the labor market, but after nine years in France, their activity rates were almost equal to native workers. But because of much higher unemployment, their employment rate leveled out at 60 percent, more than 10 percentage points lower than native workers in 2011, providing evidence of some persistent structural obstacles.

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*Immigrants who arrived from 2000 onwards fared badly in the first few years after arrival.*

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While the proportions of immigrants in unemployment, the lowest-skilled work, and high-skilled work remained roughly the same over time, there was some growth in middle-skilled work: it is possible that as the inactive enter work, those employed at the lower skill levels move up the occupational ladder. The share of the foreign-born population that arrived between 2000 and 2002 employed in high- or middle-skilled jobs increased moderately, from a very low 27 percent just after arrival to 48 percent nine years later. However, the proportion remained well below the 58 percent of French-born workers in high- or middle-skilled work in 2011.

A number of factors shaped labor market outcomes:

- **Region of origin.** European immigrants displayed the best employment rates (79 percent nine years after arrival, compared to 73 percent for natives). North Africans were especially prone to unemployment. And sub-Saharan Africans were most likely to be employed in the lowest-skilled jobs and were concentrated in the lowest-skilled sectors: accommodation and food, services, and administration. Both groups of Africans are susceptible to unstable work (they are more likely to move from employment to unemployment from one year to the next, and also to move from unemployment to inactivity).
- **Reason for migration.** Those who arrived through family unification or marriage migration were especially likely to be inactive a year after arrival. But activity rates show the greatest gains over time, indicating that as these new arrivals acquire host-country capital there is some upward movement.
- **Level of education.** High-skilled migrants showed better employment rates and better protection from unemployment than migrants of other education levels.
- **Gender.** Women display lower employment rates, but because of inactivity rather than unemployment. Women are more likely to become and stay inactive than men; and men are more likely to become unemployed, but also to move from unemployment back into work. The outcomes correlated to gender and ethnic origin tend to intensify one another: after nine years, only 35



percent of North African women were working. Migrant women were more likely to work in public administration, education, and social work.

- **Economic conditions.** The fact that longer-standing immigrants were largely insulated from recession is commensurate with studies suggesting that immigrants gain a more secure foothold in the labor market with time.

After almost a decade, many immigrants remained in a precarious position on the labor market. Explanations for this may include difficulties recognizing credentials, cultural norms (especially for African women), discrimination, the structure of the French labor market, and the inefficiency of labor market integration policies.

## I. Introduction

The high unemployment levels of immigrants and their descendants in France has triggered intense debate about the structural barriers they face in the labor market, such as ethnic discrimination.<sup>1</sup> Yet most of these studies have focused on long-standing or second-generation immigrants whose education levels tend to be similar to those of the mainstream population.

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*The French labor market can be especially hostile to new immigrants because of its restrictions on foreign nationals working in a number of professions.*

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Rather less attention has been paid to the labor market trajectories of newly arrived immigrants, despite the fact that they face many of the same obstacles to getting work. Stringent regulation of certain professions and rigid pathways into a number of occupations can make it more difficult for those who have missed the bottom rung (for example, those who have not completed secondary education) to get on the ladder. Moreover, the French labor market can be especially hostile to new immigrants because of its restrictions on foreign nationals working in a number of professions.<sup>2</sup> In recent years, a boom in fixed-term contracts in France—especially for young people and immigrants—has raised concerns that some workers get stuck in a spiral of temporary contracts.<sup>3</sup>

These labor market obstacles are likely to be exacerbated by the fact that new arrivals often lack host-country human capital, such as language proficiency, professional networks, and knowledge of local labor market norms. A very high proportion of recent immigrants to France arrived through family, rather than labor, channels. While many of these adults were eligible to participate in the labor market, family arrivals

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1 See (among others) Romain Aeberhardt, Denis Fougère, Julien Pouget, and Roland Rathelot, “L’emploi et les salaires des enfants d’immigrés,” *Economie et Statistique* 433, no. 1 (2011): 31-46; Dominique Meurs, Ariane Pailhé, and Patrick Simon, “The Persistence of Intergenerational Inequalities Linked to Immigration: Labour Market Outcomes for Immigrants and Their Descendants in France,” *Population-E* 61, no. 5-6 (2006): 645-82.

2 In 2005, foreign nationals were barred from 6 million jobs (approximately one-third of the labor market), including public-sector jobs, 50 private-sector careers (including veterinarians and pilots), and self-employed regulated professions (such as lawyers, doctors, architects, and pharmacists). An update of these figures in 2010 shows that 5.3 million jobs (about 20 percent of all employment) are still reserved for French nationals. See Observatoire des inégalités, “5,3 millions d’emplois demeurent fermés aux étrangers non européens,” September 17, 2011, [www.inegalites.fr/spip.php?article1480](http://www.inegalites.fr/spip.php?article1480).

3 See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “Protecting jobs, enhancing flexibility: A new look at employment protection legislation,” in *OECD Employment Outlook 2013* (Paris: OECD, 2013), [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2013/protecting-jobs-enhancing-flexibility-a-new-look-at-employment-protection-legislation\\_empl\\_outlook-2013-6-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2013/protecting-jobs-enhancing-flexibility-a-new-look-at-employment-protection-legislation_empl_outlook-2013-6-en).



## Box I. Data and Definitions

This study has a broader remit than available survey data on the labor market trajectories of immigrants in France. The ELIPA (Enquête Longitudinale sur l'Intégration des Primo-Arrivants) survey only examines the labor market trajectories of newly arrived third-country nationals who have moved to France on a permanent basis one and three years after gaining a resident permit. Given the absence of longitudinal studies of *all* new immigrants, this report undertakes a synthetic cohort analysis of the French Labor Force Survey (complemented with a cross-sectional analysis of the Trajectories and Origins Survey) in order to analyze the employment outcomes of immigrants over time.

The Labor Force Survey provides quarterly information on members of households over age 14 living in metropolitan France. Since the 2003 round of the survey, each respondent has been interviewed for six consecutive quarters. The findings are representative for the general population ages 15 and over; numbers are adjusted with a weighting factor.

The methodology of the Labor Force Survey changed in 2003, so comparative data is only available from this year onwards. For the analysis in this report, the authors pooled the datasets between 2003 and 2011 and generated “pseudo-cohorts” of migrants according to their period of arrival in France. Due to small sample sizes, annual cohorts were clustered to generate three groups: migrants who arrived between 2000 and 2002, those who arrived between 2003 and 2005, and those arriving from 2006 to 2008.

In this study, “immigrants” are those who are foreign born with a foreign nationality at birth—this group accounts for between 9 and 10 percent of the sample of 66,000 (from 2009 onwards; previously 46,000 were interviewed) in the Labor Force Survey. The term “immigrants” includes both mobile EU citizens and third-country nationals. Among newcomers from Europe, 88 percent were mobile EU citizens, and the rest were immigrants from non-EU countries.

“New immigrants” are immigrants who arrived in France in 2000 and onwards. The analysis covers only immigrants who entered in France at working age (15 to 59 years old). The number of observations for each year varies between 428 in 2003 to 1,823 in 2011.

*Source:* See Immigration, asile, accueil et accompagnement des étrangers en France, “Enquête Longitudinale sur l'Intégration des Primo-Arrivants (ELIPA),” accessed April 11, 2014, [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Etudes/Enquete-Longitudinale-sur-l-Integration-des-Primo-Arrivants-ELIPA](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Etudes/Enquete-Longitudinale-sur-l-Integration-des-Primo-Arrivants-ELIPA).

tend to suffer from worse outcomes as their skills are not necessarily in demand in the local labor market.<sup>4</sup> In recent years, the French government has attempted to alter the ratio of labor to nonlabor migration with its policy of *immigration choisie* (selected immigration) that seeks to increase skilled migration.<sup>5</sup> These policies have been far from successful: between 2006 and 2010, economic immigration only rose from 6 percent to 9 percent of entries, while family immigration declined from 54 percent to 44 percent.

This report examines how new arrivals fared in the French labor market in the 2000s, a period of considerable economic and policy change. In addition to encouraging skilled migration, the decade also saw the onset of the financial crisis and a deep recession. The report analyzes the extent to which new immigrants were able to find work commensurate with their skills and experience and move upward within their occupations. It also examines the employment trends in the sectors in which immigrants found work.

4 According to estimates by the statistical department of the French Ministry of the Interior, more than 100,000 third-country nationals entered the labor market every year between 2007 and 2009. Jean-François Léger and Yves Bream, “Flux annuel d'entrées d'actifs étrangers sur le marché de l'emploi français” (memo for the Department of Statistics of the General Secretary for Immigration and Integration, March 20, 2013), [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Etudes/Etudes-et-documents/Flux-annuel-d-entrees-d-actifs-etrangers-sur-le-marche-de-l-emploi-francais](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Etudes/Etudes-et-documents/Flux-annuel-d-entrees-d-actifs-etrangers-sur-le-marche-de-l-emploi-francais).

5 Four pieces of immigration legislation were enacted between 2003 and 2011, each of them trying to implement a new framing of the *immigration choisie* (selective immigration) policy. In 2007, the government established a goal of raising labor immigration from 10 percent to 50 percent of total annual flows, but with little success. See Patrick Simon “Les revirements de la politique d'immigration,” *Cahiers Français* 369 (2012): 86-91.



## II. Immigration to France

France has a long history of labor, colonial and postcolonial, and family immigration. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, migrants arrived from neighboring countries such as Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy. Then, like many other Western European countries, France actively recruited foreign workers in the post-war period, initially receiving Italian and Spanish migrants, and then Algerians (who could freely move to France since the 1940s). Following the end of the Algerian war and decolonization at the beginning of the 1960s, many Algerians and other North Africans entered France; followed by Portuguese, Turks, and at the end of the 1980s, sub-Saharan Africans.

The French government suspended unskilled labor migration following the 1973 oil crisis, although some labor migration continued alongside family and illegal immigration flows. The suspension resulted in a stark decline in arrivals from 130,000 in 1974 to 80,000 in 1975;<sup>6</sup> entries of foreign nationals remained at approximately 60,000 a year throughout the 1980s and began to rise again in the early 1990s. Since 2000, migration of third-country nationals (including students) has been about 200,000 annually (falling to 190,000 since 2006).

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*The majority of immigrants arrived in France to join a family member.*

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During the first decade of the millennium, a total of approximately 2 million immigrants from outside the European Union entered France on a permanent basis (for more than a year).<sup>7</sup> In 2010, the population of immigrants reached 5,514,000, equivalent to nearly 9 percent of the population.<sup>8</sup> The population of third-country nationals (immigrants from outside the European Union) was almost twice as high as EU nationals (65 percent compared to 35 percent).<sup>9</sup>

The majority of immigrants arrived in France to join a family member (usually spouse or a parent); others entered as asylum seekers or for study; and the smallest portion migrated with an employment contract, and thus entered directly into the French labor market.<sup>10</sup>

## III. The Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals

Immigrants to France in the 2000s came from a number of different regions, and the composition of inflows changed over the decade (See Table 1). The first cohort in the analysis—those arriving from 2000 to 2002—were about one-third from North Africa, a little less than one-quarter from Europe, and one-fifth from sub-Saharan Africa. The remaining 23 percent came from elsewhere, including Asia. In subsequent cohorts the proportion of Europeans increased (to 32 percent among 2003 to 2005 arrivals; and 36 percent among 2006 to 2008 arrivals) as a result of the enlargement of the European Union and the associated migration of workers from new Member States.<sup>11</sup>

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6 Due to their special status, Algerians were recorded separately, totaling 550,000 entries but nearly 540,000 exits in 1974.

7 Migration statistics in France are, like in most countries, imperfect. They rely on residence permits which only cover non-EU migrants and also include people granted residence permits through regularization, approval of refugee status, or for long-stay visas. Asylum-seekers are not included—there were an estimated 48,000 initial asylum applications in 2010 according to the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA).

8 National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), “Répartition des immigrants par pays de naissance,” accessed April 21, 2014, [www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg\\_id=0&ref\\_id=immigrespaysnais](http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/tableau.asp?reg_id=0&ref_id=immigrespaysnais).

9 Eurostat, “Population by sex, age group and citizenship [migr\_pop1ctz], 2010,” updated April 10, 2014, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_pop1ctz&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_pop1ctz&lang=en).

10 In the 2000s, the migration flows were overwhelmingly composed of family migration (45 to 54 percent depending on the years), and ranged from 17 percent to 10 percent for labor migration. This distribution appears to be quite stable despite the significant changes to the immigration policy during the period.

11 In 2010, 88 percent of the European population was from within the European Union.





Among each cohort of immigrants, women outnumbered men, and this gap widened for the most recently arrived cohort.<sup>12</sup> Although this reflects a greater share of family unification-driven migration among women, single or “pioneer” migration for work or study has become increasingly common too—especially among migrants from the European Union, Central Africa, and the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>13</sup>

Immigrants’ educational attainment was fairly stable across the cohorts: approximately 40 percent of immigrants who arrived since 2000 lacked any qualifications, 30 percent held a secondary education degree (vocational education and high school), and 30 percent held a tertiary education degree. However, there was a small decrease over time in immigrants without a secondary degree and a corresponding increase in immigrants with higher levels of education.

**Table 1. Characteristics of New Arrivals to France, 2000-08**

	2000-02 Arrival Cohort (%)	2003-05 Arrival Cohort (%)	2006-08 Arrival Cohort (%)
<b>Gender</b>			
Men	49.9	44	41.8
Women	51.1	56	58.2
<b>Region of Origin</b>			
Europe	23.3	32.2	35.9
North Africa	33.4	30.1	25.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	20.3	15.3	14.8
Other	22.9	23.4	23.7
<b>Education</b>			
No Diploma	42	39.3	36.4
Vocational and High School	27.1	30.4	30.7
Tertiary Education	30.9	30.3	32.9

*Source:* Authors’ analysis based on French Labor Force Survey data from the National Institute for Statistics and Economic Studies, pooled datasets 2003-11.

### A. New Immigrants’ Access to Employment

As elsewhere, immigrants faced a number of barriers to accessing work. These obstacles include limited language proficiency, few professional contacts, and difficulties demonstrating how skills and experience fit with employers’ requirements. The data do show that outcomes improved over time—though only modestly for some groups.

In France, the early performance of new arrivals was especially bleak. A large proportion of immigrants failed to enter work within the first few years, either because they were unable to find work, chose not to look for work, or were discouraged in their search. Those who arrived through marriage migration or family reunification were especially prone to inactivity. According to the 2006 Longitudinal Survey of the Trajectories and Profiles of Migrants (PPM), 60 percent of immigrants who arrived as spouses of a French

<sup>12</sup> Cris Beauchemin, Catherine Borrel, and Corinne Régnard, “Immigrants in France: a female majority,” *Population and Societies* 502 (July-August 2013), [www.ined.fr/fichier/t\\_publication/1648/publi\\_pdf2\\_population\\_societies\\_2013\\_502\\_immigrants\\_women.pdf](http://www.ined.fr/fichier/t_publication/1648/publi_pdf2_population_societies_2013_502_immigrants_women.pdf).

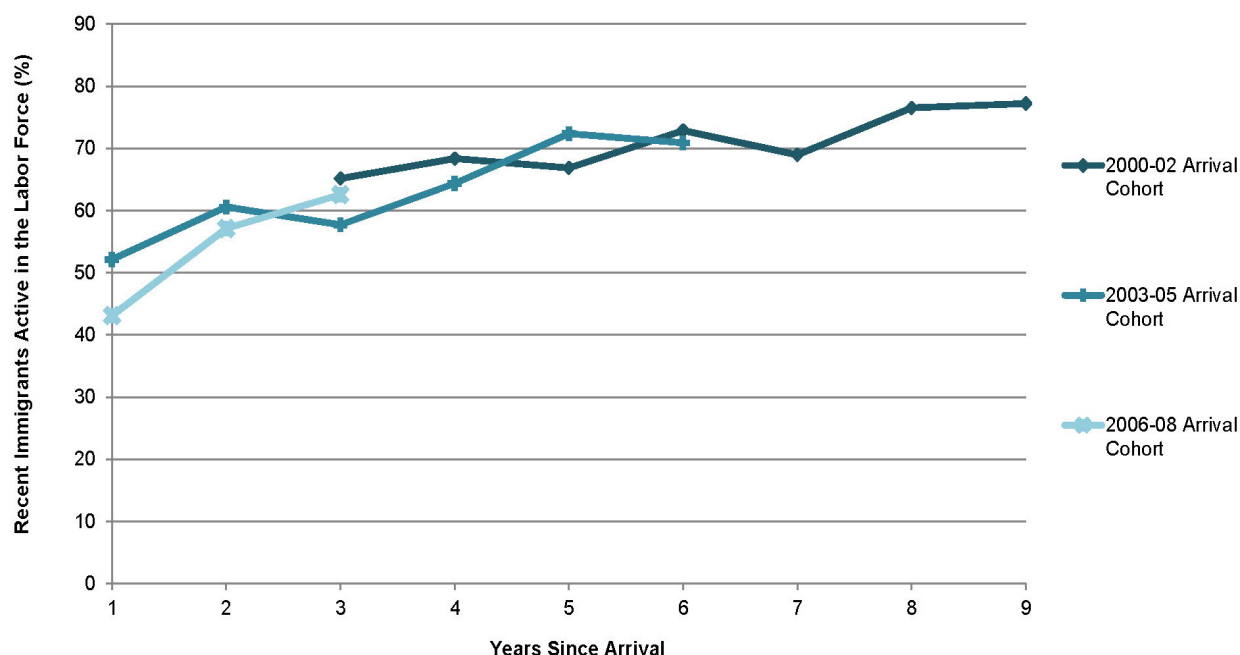
<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

citizen, and 83 percent of those who came through family reunification were economically inactive a year after arrival.<sup>14</sup>

Data from the Labor Force Survey (LFS) confirm these low levels of activity among new immigrants. One year after arrival, only 52 percent of the 2003-05 cohort and 43 percent of the 2006-08 cohort participated in the labor market.<sup>15</sup> Almost one-third of both cohorts were unemployed; and employment rates were low, at 35 percent and 30 percent respectively.

Over time, outcomes improved considerably. The greatest change occurred in the activity rate, which refers to the number of people in the workforce (whether employed or unemployed) as a percentage of the total working-age population. The activity rate of all cohorts increased swiftly with duration of stay. For the 2000-02 cohort, the activity rate almost caught up with the native population (80 percent) after nine years in France (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Labor Force Activity Rates of Immigrants to France Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Years Since Arrival**



Note: This and all subsequent figures refer to immigrants to France ages 15 and over.

Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

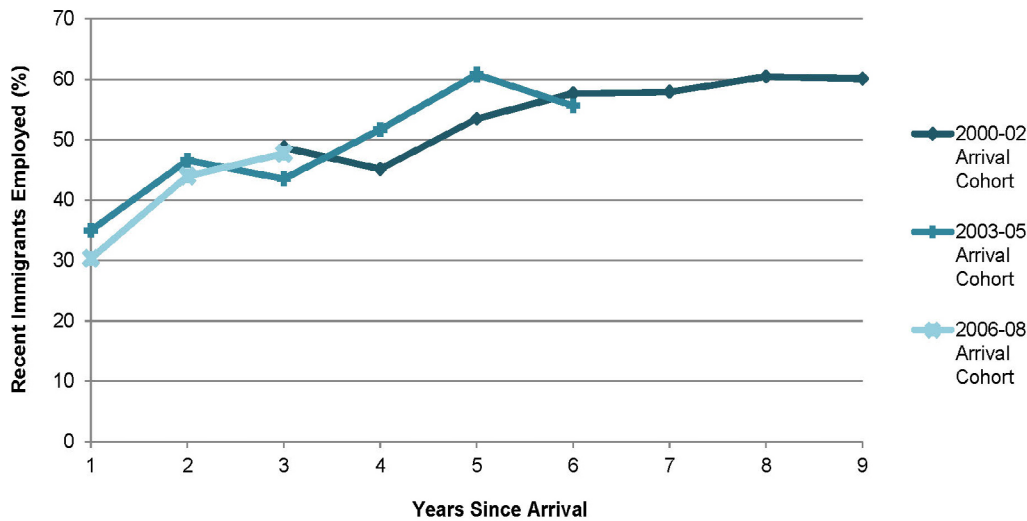
Employment rates also improved over time (see Figure 2), although immigrants failed to ultimately catch up with natives. Immigrants' employment rates remained more than 10 percent below those of native workers, which averaged 73 percent between 2003 and 2011.

14 The data come from the Longitudinal Survey of the Trajectories and Profiles of Migrants (PPM). See Marilyne Bèque, "Qui sont les nouveaux bénéficiaires d'un titre de séjour en France?" *Etudes et Résultats* 612 (2007), [www.drees.sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/er612.pdf](http://www.drees.sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/er612.pdf); and Corinne Régnard and Florent Domergue "Les nouveaux migrants en 2009," *Infos Migrations* 19 (January 2011), [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Publications/Numeros-parus-en-2011/Enquete-ELIPA-Les-nouveaux-migrants-en-2009](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Publications/Numeros-parus-en-2011/Enquete-ELIPA-Les-nouveaux-migrants-en-2009). Women are not only more likely to be inactive prior to migration, but are more susceptible to retreat from the labor market after they migrate to France. The survey found that half of women had a job the year before migrating (compared to 74 percent of men), but a year after arrival only 26 percent had entered employment (compared to 67 percent of men). Moreover, 36 percent of migrant women who arrived in 2006 transitioned from economic activity to inactivity. For women with tertiary education, the figure is even higher at 48 percent. See Elisabeth Algava and Marilyne Bèque, "Nouveaux détenteurs et détentrices d'un titre de séjour: des trajectoires familiales et professionnelles contrastées," *Regards sur la Parité* (2008): 37-50, [www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs\\_ffc/ref/fhparit08c.pdf](http://www.insee.fr/fr/ffc/docs_ffc/ref/fhparit08c.pdf).

15 Due to changes in the Labor Force Survey's methodology in 2003, our longitudinal follow-ups start in 2003. Therefore, data on the first years of the 2000-02 cohort are not available.



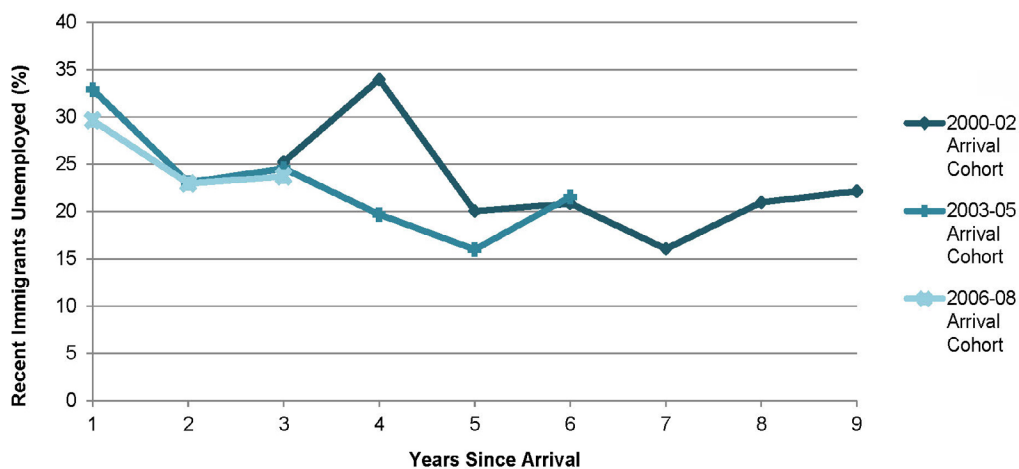
**Figure 2. Employment Rates of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

The flipside of these low employment rates is persistent unemployment (see Figure 3). For both the 2003-05 and 2006-08 arrival cohorts, the unemployment rate exceeded 30 percent in the first year after arrival in France, after which it declined. For the 2003-05 cohort, after the fifth year it flattened out at a relatively high 20 percent (whereas the unemployment rate of the native population was 8 percent to 9 percent during the same period).

**Figure 3. Unemployment Rates of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

Beyond some fluctuations due to sample size, the data show that participation in the labor market increased rapidly during the first five years after arrival for all cohorts, while unemployment decreased dramatically. Gaps between immigrant and native workers then declined slowly until year six, when they stabilized.<sup>16</sup> At the milestone of three years (the only comparison point for all cohorts) newer cohorts displayed slightly lower unemployment rates (23.7 percent for the 2006-08 arrivals, compared to 24.6 percent for 2003-05 arrivals and 25.2 percent for the 2000-02 arrivals), possibly as a result of a higher share of skilled migrants

<sup>16</sup> One caveat is that data after this point are only available for one cohort; more years of observation are required to construct a fuller picture. Additionally, the inception of the economic crisis in 2009 may have distorted standard patterns of labor market integration.

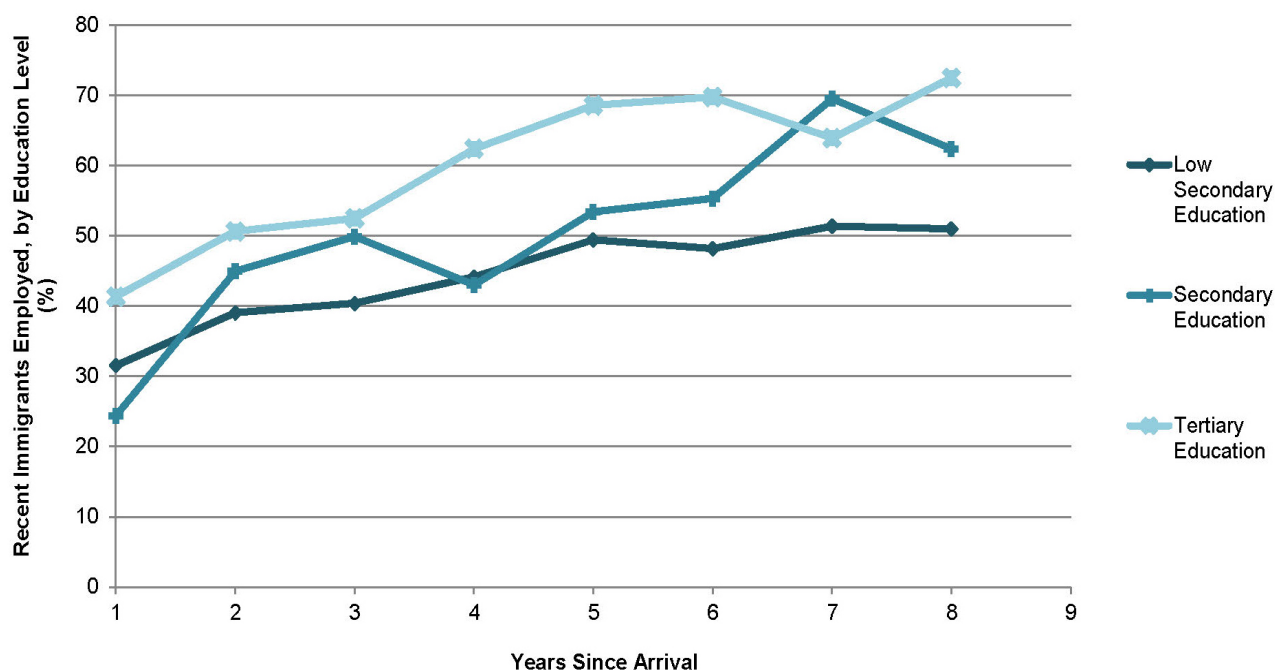
and Europeans in the latest arrival cohort (see Table 1). But the bump in unemployment from 2010 onwards had a detrimental impact only on the most recent cohorts, suggesting that earlier groups of immigrants may have been less susceptible to job losses or employed in sectors that were insulated from the recession (see also Figure 10).

## B. Influence of Individual Characteristics on Employment Outcomes

The probability an immigrant will find work is shaped by his or her individual characteristics, such as education level, social capital, gender, and country of origin.

Individuals with higher education levels tend to thrive in the labor market because their skills are in demand. Our analysis finds that, unsurprisingly, holding at least a tertiary education diploma increases the likelihood of employment (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Employment Rate of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Education Level and Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

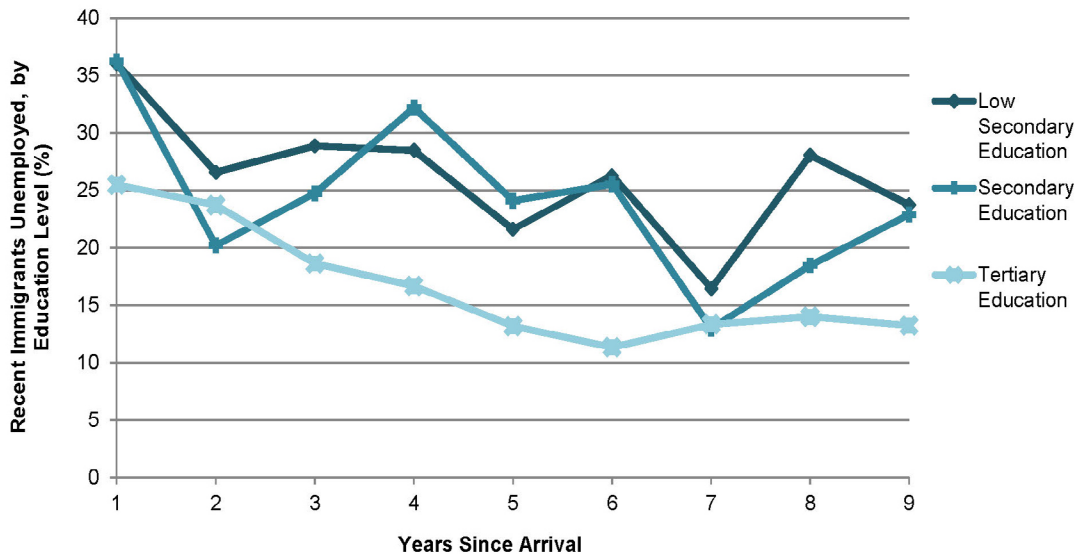
With an unemployment rate of 13.2 percent nine years after arrival, high-educated migrants were also better protected from unemployment than those with a secondary-education degree or with no qualifications at all (see Figure 5). However, their outcomes still remained below those of natives with the same credentials, for whom the unemployment rate is only 5.4 percent.

These gaps are more significant for those with less education: recent immigrants with high school degrees displayed unemployment rates of 23 percent after nine years of residence, compared to 15.6 percent for long-established immigrants and 7.9 percent for natives. While a secondary education gives natives a boost, this advantage fails to materialize for new immigrants. This suggests that the returns on secondary diplomas are relatively low for new immigrants in the French labor market.

Another critical factor shaping labor market success is gender. In general, migrant women display lower employment rates than men (see Figure 6). The gender gap persists over time: even after nine years it hovers at approximately 25 percentage points, while the gap among natives declined from 11 percent to 9 percent between 2003 and 2012.



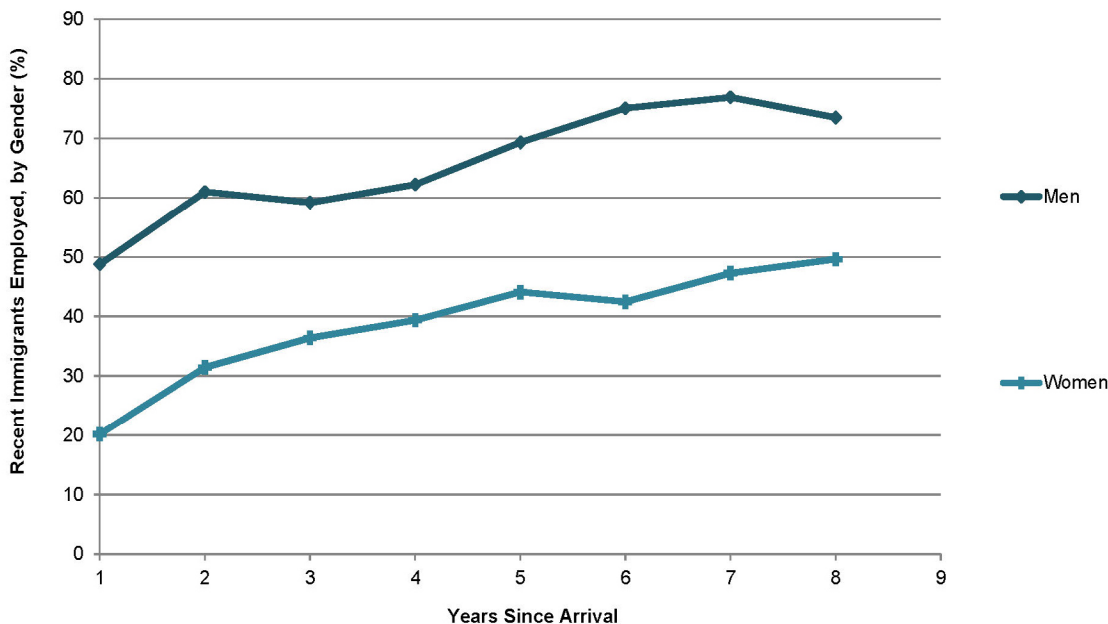
**Figure 5. Unemployment Rates of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Educational Attainment and Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-2011.

Women's inactivity in the labor market largely accounts for this gap; in fact their unemployment rates tend to converge over time towards those of men. A logistic regression shows that their risk of being inactive is 6.5 times higher than men when controlling for education, age, country of origin, duration of stay, and cohort.<sup>17</sup>

**Figure 6. Employment Rates of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Gender and Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

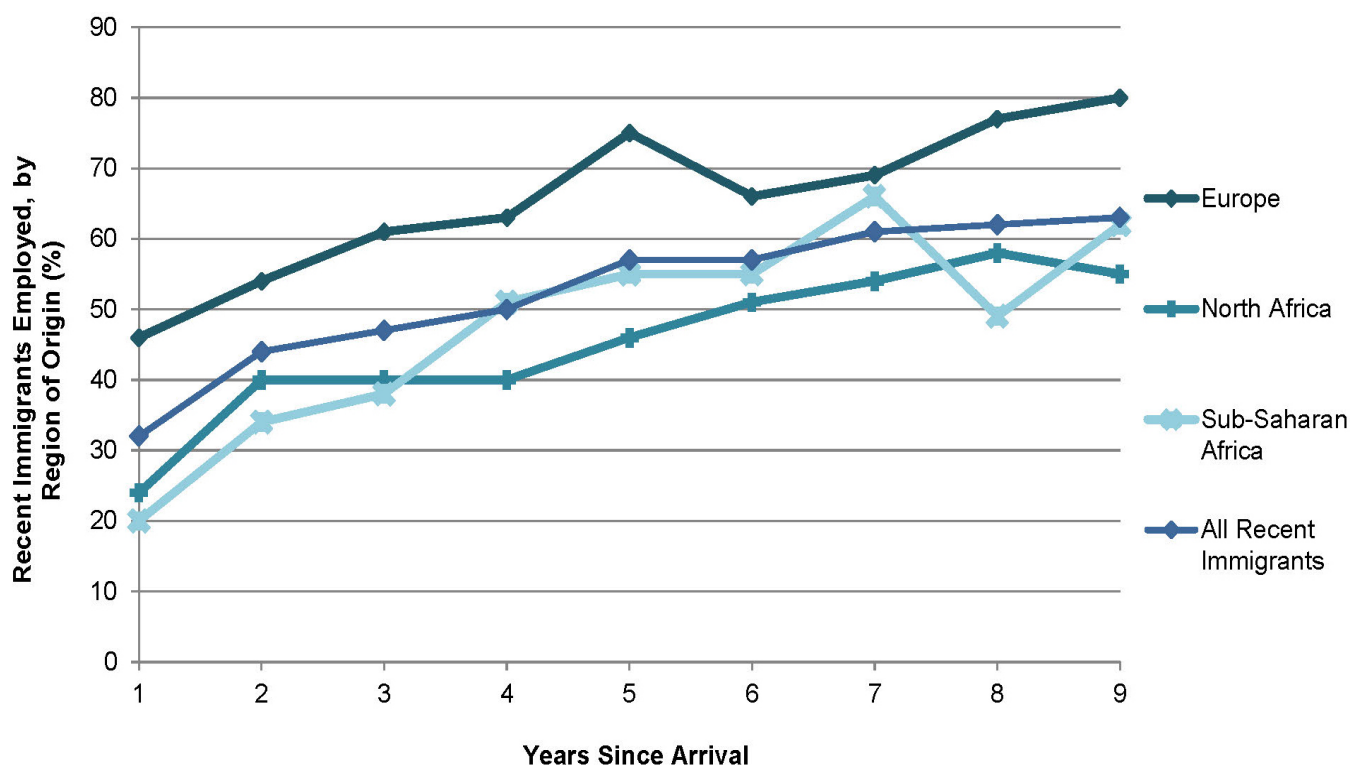
<sup>17</sup> The logistic regression estimates the probability of being inactive (meaning neither employed nor unemployed, rather not looking for work) among new immigrants (pooled dataset from 2003 to 2011, n=8,575).

Finally, country of origin also influences trajectories. From the point of arrival, European migrants displayed the highest employment rates: 46 percent were employed one year after arrival, compared to less than 30 percent for other groups of migrants (see Figure 7). With time, employment rates increased for groups of all origins, but migrants from non-European countries did not catch up with European migrants. On the contrary, the gap increased. Nine years after arrival, 55 percent of non-European migrants and 79 percent of Europeans were in employment. The gap reflects the fact that higher proportions of non-European migrants are unemployed or inactive.

Of all origin-country groups, North African migrants are especially prone to unemployment, however both groups of Africans had lower employment rates than other migrants and natives (see Figure 7). One factor behind these poor labor market outcomes is lower education levels. Half of all North Africans (42 percent of sub-Saharan Africans) who arrived after 2000 had less than a secondary diploma, compared to less than one-third of Europeans. Meanwhile, 37 percent of newly arrived Europeans were tertiary educated, compared to a quarter of the African groups. Within the “other” category (not shown in Figure 7), 35 percent had less than a high school degree, 27 percent were secondary educated, and 31 percent were tertiary educated.<sup>18</sup>

The intersection between gender and ethnic origin may also exacerbate the vulnerability on the labor market. Gender disparities tend to be higher among North Africans than among Europeans or sub-Saharan Africans. After nine years of residence, only 35 percent of North African women and 72 percent of North African men were working, compared to 54 percent of sub-Saharan African women and 72 percent of sub-Saharan African men; and 74 percent of European women and 86 percent of European men. North African women displayed a low level of labor market activity, as well as a higher likelihood of unemployment.

**Figure 7. Employment Rates of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, by Region of Origin and Years Since Arrival**



Notes: The “other” category (comprising migrants from Asia and Turkey, among other places) is not shown separately. Source: Authors’ analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

<sup>18</sup> Authors’ analysis of Labor Force Survey data.

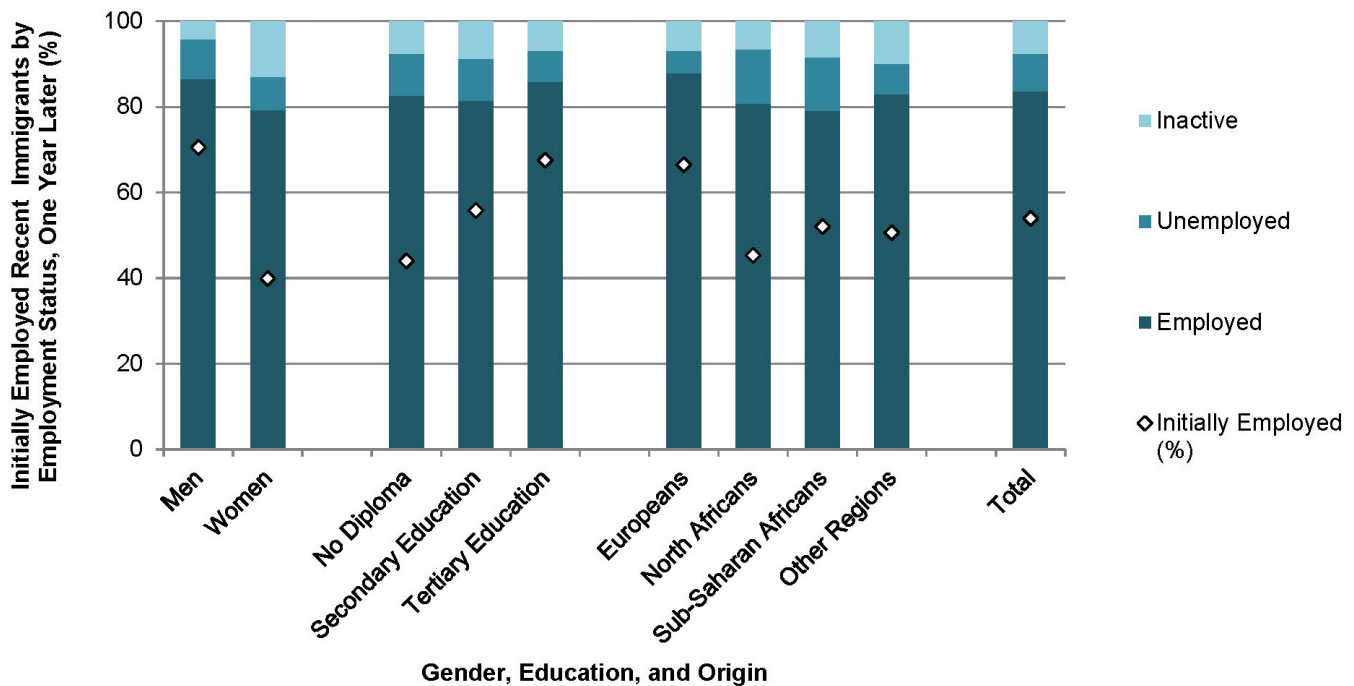


### C. Influence of Individual Characteristics on Stability of Work

The LFS collects data on the type of economic activity the year before the survey, permitting analysis of how immigrants' employment status changes year to year. These data provide a picture of whether immigrants enjoy stable employment or move frequently in and out of work, and whether they exit periods of unemployment or inactivity readily or stagnate in these periods. Figure 8 marks the percentage of migrants who were employed in a given year; and then shows the proportions of this employed group who remained employed, or became unemployed or inactive, one year later.

As the time period of measurement is short—one year—stability is the most frequent situation. Overall, 84 percent of employed migrants remained employed the following year, and 79 percent of inactive migrants remained inactive. Fewer migrants remained unemployed year on year, but this is not necessarily because they found work: half of unemployed migrants moved out of unemployment, but only a third of these entered work (rather than inactivity).

**Figure 8. Employment Status of Initially Employed Immigrants (All Cohorts), One Year Later**



*Note:* All cohorts are pooled together over the eight-year period. The figure shows that of the 54 percent of immigrants employed in a given year, 84 percent remained employed, 9 percent moved to unemployment, and 7 percent moved to inactivity one year later.

*Source:* Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

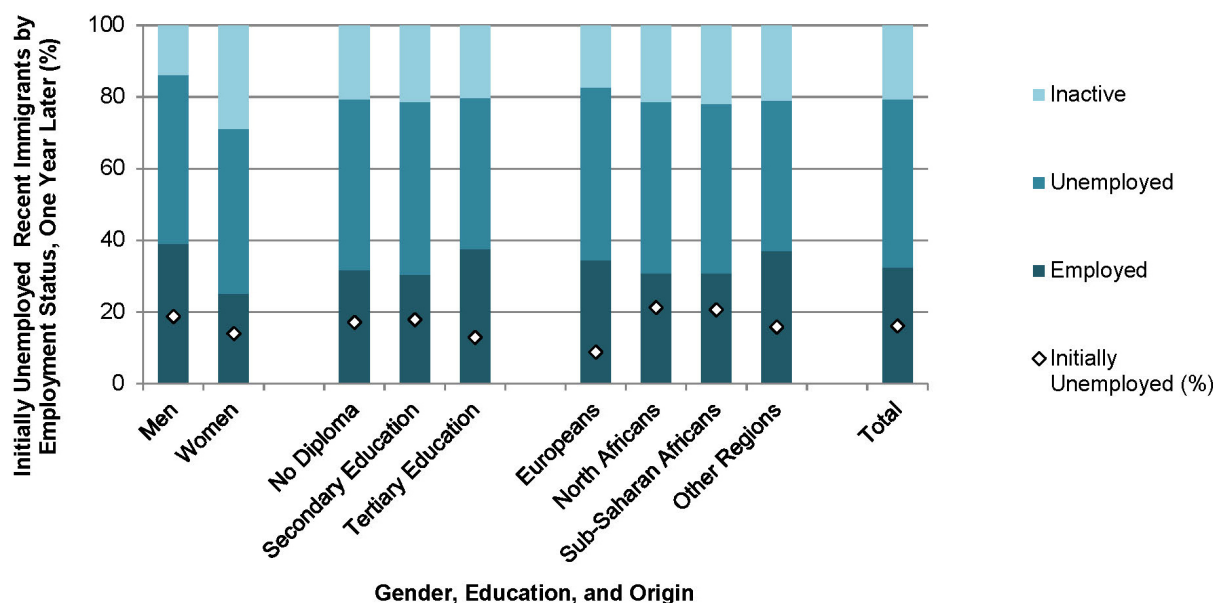
Educational attainment, gender, and origin play important roles in these annual transitions. A higher level of education makes it less likely that migrants will become unemployed (7 percent of employed migrants with a tertiary education in any given year became unemployed the following year, compared to 9 percent overall) and appears to make it easier to move from unemployment to employment (see Figure 9; 38 percent of unemployed immigrants with a tertiary degree, compared to 32 percent of those with a high school degree or less, became employed). Finally, migrants without qualifications are more frequently inactive and less likely to move into employment than those with higher levels of education.

Men have greater employment stability than women: they are more likely to be employed in any given year than women (71 percent and 40 percent respectively) as well as to remain employed the year later (87

percent and 79 percent). But men are more likely to become unemployed whereas women are more likely to become inactive (as might be expected as they may leave work to care for children). Women are also more likely to remain inactive from one year to the next.

African immigrants—both from North and sub-Saharan Africa—are more likely to be unemployed than European immigrants, and they are more likely to remain in this situation. Not only are Africans more likely to move from employment to unemployment, but they are less likely to be employed the next year. They are also more prone to move from unemployment to inactivity, a trajectory of retreat from the labor market that might be explained in part by their experiences of discrimination, or their limited prospects of employment given lower education levels than natives and foreign workers from Europe and elsewhere.

**Figure 9. Employment Status of Initially Unemployed Immigrants (All Cohorts), One Year Later**



*Note:* All cohorts are pooled together over the eight-year period. The figure shows that of the 16 percent of immigrants unemployed in a given year, 47 percent remained unemployed, 32 percent moved to employment, and 21 percent moved to inactivity one year later.

*Source:* Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

#### D. The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Immigrants' Employment Outcomes

One defining feature of recent labor market history is the global economic crisis of 2007-08 and the ongoing Eurozone crisis. The recession in France did not trigger the large growth in unemployment that recessions did elsewhere in Europe, but some of the impact of the twin crises appears to have been delayed, since greater jobs losses were recorded in 2012.

Were recent immigrants hit more severely than others because of their relative vulnerability on the labor market? Because of data limitations, the analysis by duration of stay cannot provide an estimate of the economic shock caused by the recession in 2008 and the following years. We use here cross-sectional data from the LFS and display unemployment rates by years of observation. Unemployment in France declined sharply in 2005 and 2006, and has been steadily rising since 2008 until 2013.

In fact, new immigrants improved their position on the labor market over time, compensating for the negative impact of the crisis (see Figure 10). But the detrimental impact of the crisis on employment prospects can be seen for all cohorts: the continuous drop in unemployment for the oldest cohort (2000-02) reversed in 2008, while the unemployment outcomes of the two most recent cohorts (2003-05 and 2006-08) worsened starting in 2010, instead of improving as expected with more time spent in the country.





**Figure 10. Unemployment Rates of Immigrants Arriving 2000 to 2008, 2003-11**

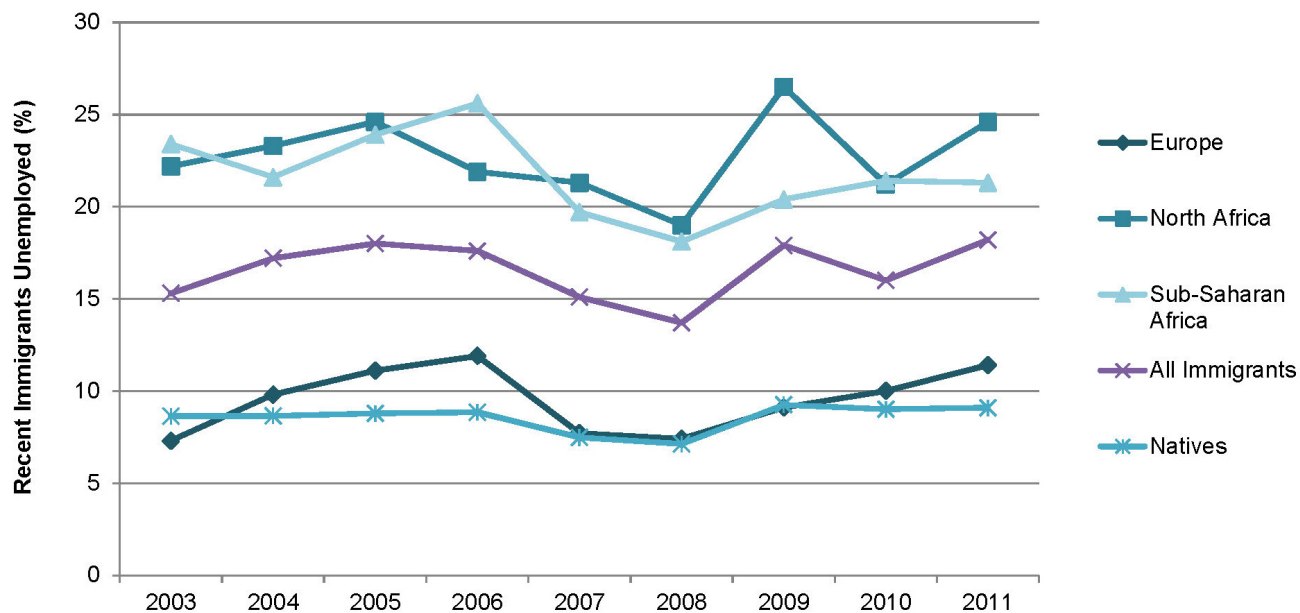


Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

Natives and various groups of migrants experience considerable variation in unemployment (see Figure 11). The unemployment rates of the native population and European immigrants oscillated around the 10 percent mark during this period, whereas the rates for North and sub-Saharan African immigrants remained at least twice as high, between 18 percent and 27 percent. New immigrants had higher levels of unemployment than long established immigrants at the beginning of the period, but the gap narrowed toward the end of the period.

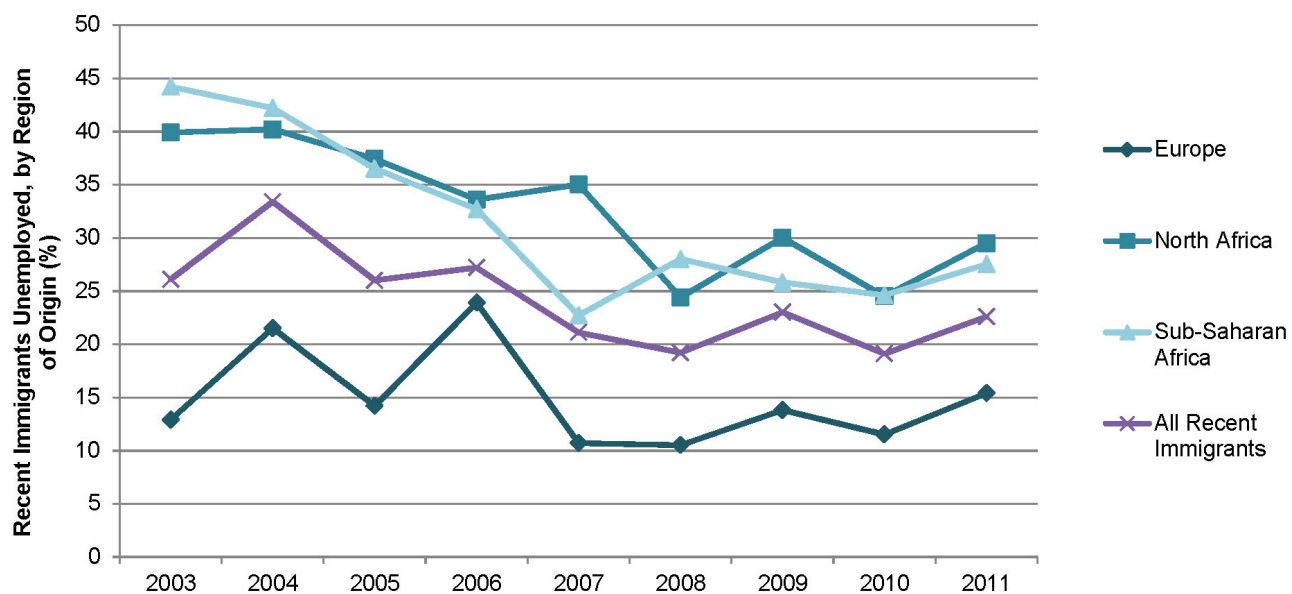
The impact of the crisis appears to have been more severe for Europeans than for North Africans and sub-Saharan Africans. All groups gained between 3.5 to 5 percentage points in unemployment between 2008 and 2011, but their initial starting points were different. In 2008, the unemployment rate among African immigrants was a little below 20 percent, and it was approximately 7 percent for natives and European immigrants. In this context, African immigrants actually experienced a relatively moderate growth in their unemployment.

Recent immigrants (those arriving after 2000) faced higher unemployment between 2003 and 2011, relative to both long-term immigrants and natives (see Figure 12). But their exposure to unemployment appears to have fallen in the years following 2008, bucking the overall trend. One of the explanations for the relative advantage of new immigrants during the economic recession may be that some of those who were already unemployed left the labor market rather than continuing to look for new work or that they left the country entirely.

**Figure 11. Unemployment Rates by Nativity and Region of Origin, 2003-11**


Note: Immigrants and groups of origin encompass the whole population, not just recent arrivals.

Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

**Figure 12. Unemployment Rates of Immigrants Arrived after 2000 by Region of Origin, 2003-11**




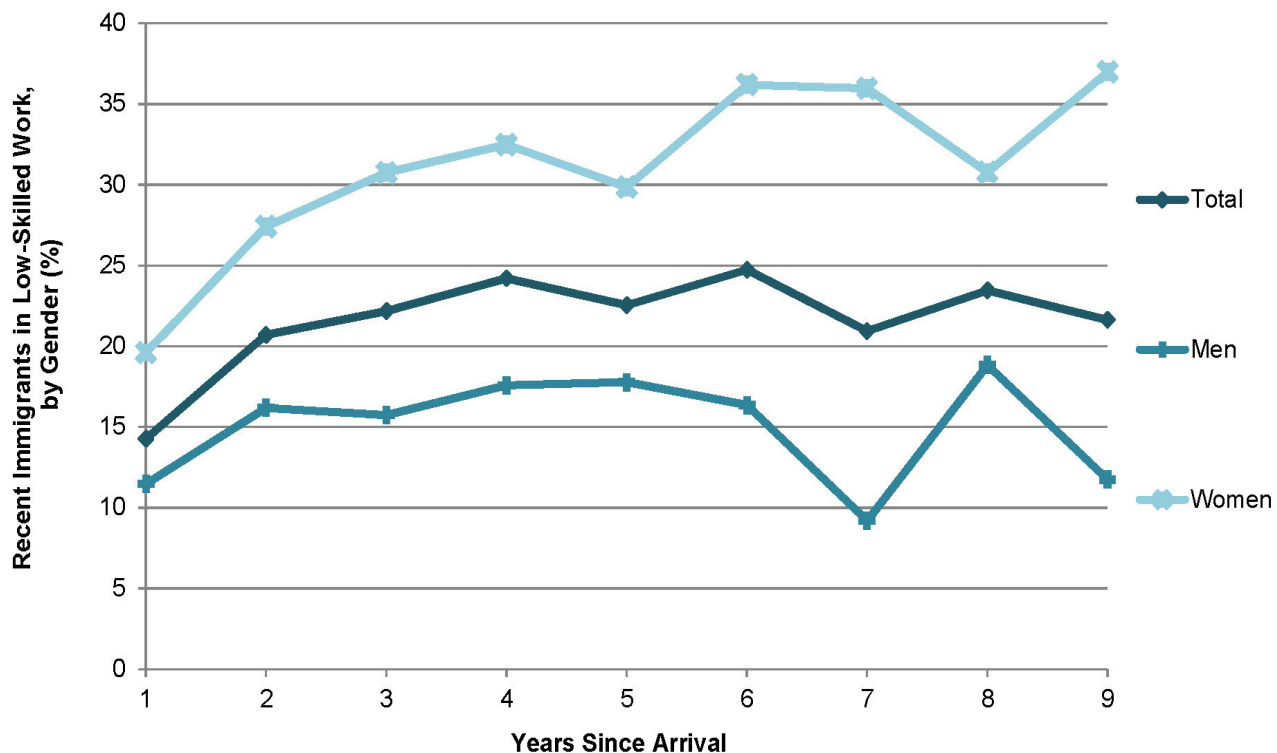
## E. Occupational Stratification

Immigrants face a number of barriers to accessing work commensurate with their skills and experience. One common finding of studies on immigrants' access to employment is that they are more likely to suffer from overqualification—being forced to take jobs below their skills and experience. This may be a reasonable price to pay for entering the labor market, but from an economic point of view, it is also a waste of competence.

Some studies have found that, over time, immigrants will find it easier to move out of low-skilled work and find jobs matching their skills and experience as they acquire host-country capital.<sup>19</sup> However, other evidence suggests immigrants are prone to stagnation in low-skilled work.

The analysis of the LFS data shows that the proportions of working immigrants in low-skilled jobs increase with time of residence.<sup>20</sup> The climb is quite sharp after the first two years (from 15 percent to 20 and then 25 percent) and then remains stable until the sixth year, after which it decreases slowly (see Figure 13). Gender inequalities are pronounced: women are not only more concentrated in low-skilled jobs when they arrive in France, but this concentration increases over time; meanwhile, the percent of newly arrived immigrant men in low-skilled work remains more stable after the first year.

**Figure 13. Share of Immigrants Arriving 2000-08 in Low-Skilled Work, by Gender and Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

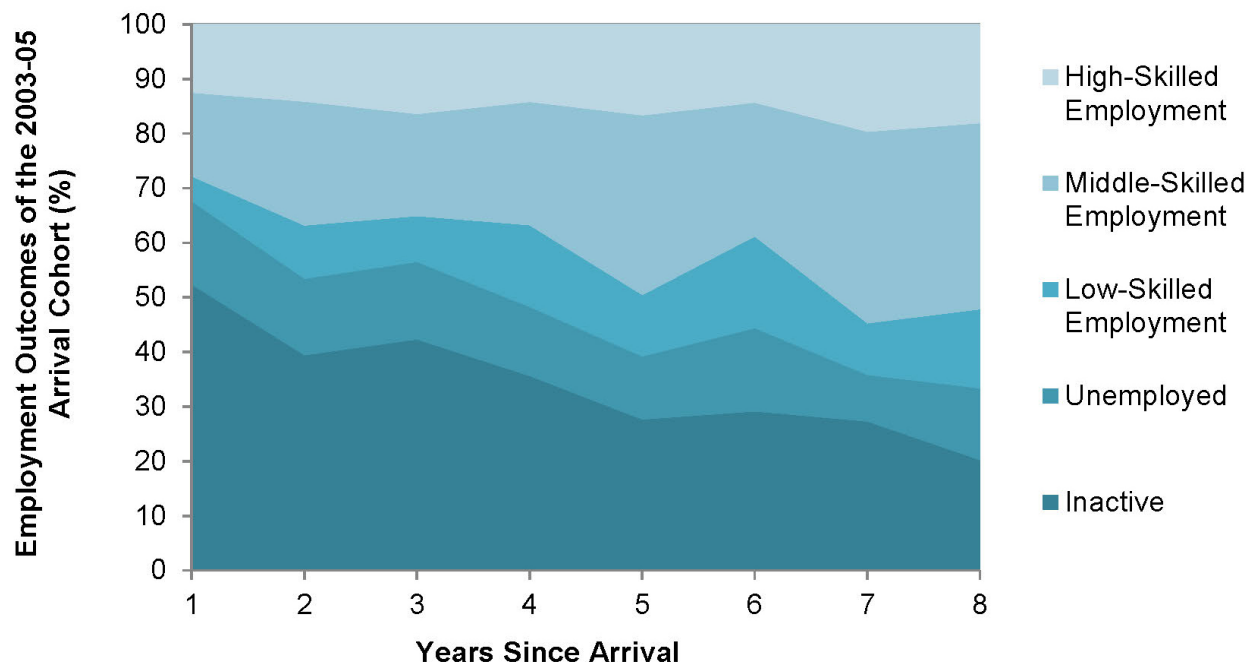
The explanations for these trends may not be as bleak as initially appear. Since highly educated immigrants are more likely to be employed early on than other migrants, the share of skilled jobs is overrepresented during the first year. The delayed entry into the labor market from the second year onwards (especially for

<sup>19</sup> For example, Barry R. Chiswick, Yew Liang Lee, and Paul W. Miller, "Patterns of Immigrant Occupational Attainment in a Longitudinal Survey," *International Migration* 41, no. 4 (2003): 47-69.

<sup>20</sup> Jobs are classified according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) structure. Low-skilled jobs are occupations classified as code 9 (elementary occupations). See International Labor Organization, "Resolution Concerning Updating the International Standard Classification of Occupations," accessed January 21, 2014, [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/docs/resol08.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/docs/resol08.pdf).

women) increases the number of immigrants in employment, and thus reduces the share of high-skilled jobs. Indeed, a cohort analysis shows that the major change over time is a growth in middle-skilled jobs alongside a drop in inactivity. Low-skilled and high-skilled jobs remain reasonably constant (see Figure 14 for an illustration with the 2003-05 arrival cohort).

**Figure 14. Employment Outcomes of Immigrants in the 2003-05 Cohort, by Years After Arrival, 2003-11**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-2011.

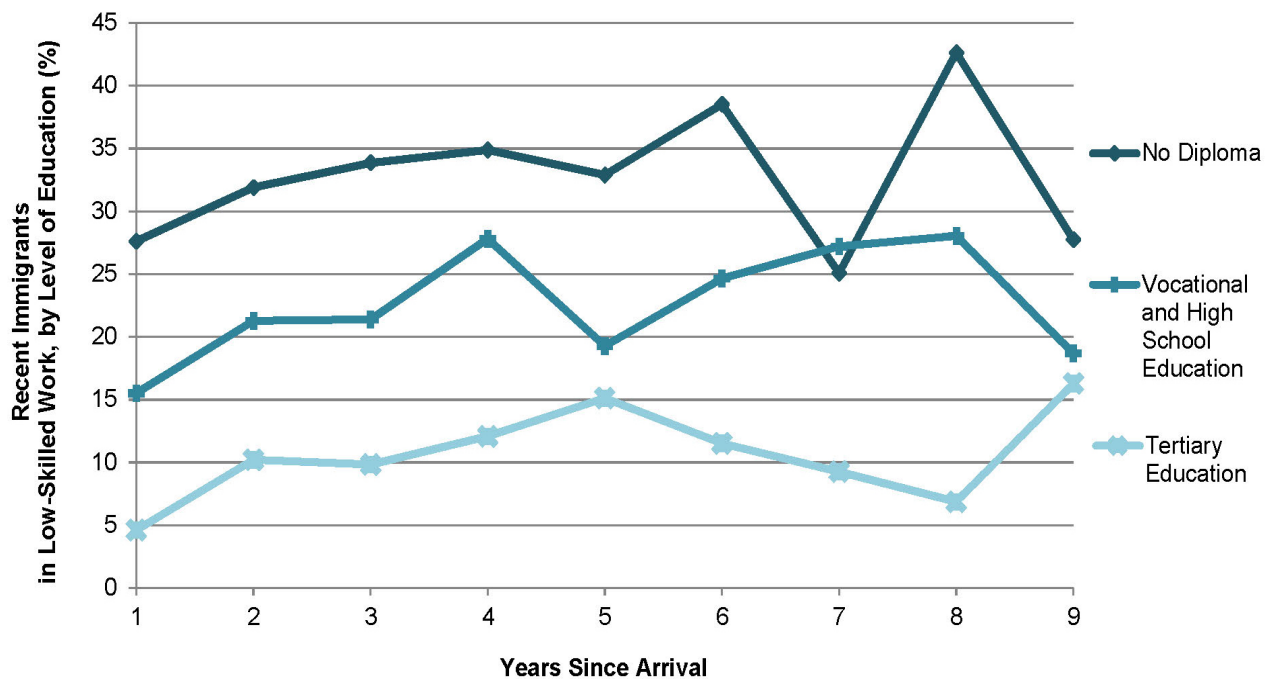
As expected, educational attainment is the main determinant of the skill level of immigrants' jobs (see Figure 15). Immigrants with a tertiary education degree occupy the lowest share of elementary jobs and the highest share of middle- and high-skilled jobs (29 percent and 71 percent respectively). However, their share of low-skilled jobs increases with duration of stay (from 5 percent at arrival to 16 percent eight years later). For new migrants who do not have a tertiary education degree, the chance of entering middle- or high-skilled work is pretty low and does not increase with duration of stay, as shown by the relative stability of the distribution by educational attainment.

Africans are more likely to work in low-skilled jobs than Europeans (see Figure 16). Even when they attained a middle or high level of education, non-EU migrants in general may face greater difficulties than EU migrants in getting their qualifications recognized on the labor market. The share of low-skilled jobs among North African migrants fluctuated during the length of stay (from 23 percent after one year in France to 20 percent after nine years) and among sub-Saharan African migrants, without a clear trend of decrease.

A logistic regression on the likelihood of immigrants occupying a highly skilled job confirms the lack of influence of the duration of stay: with the same level of education, women and non-European migrants have significantly lower chances of getting such a job than their male counterparts or European migrants.

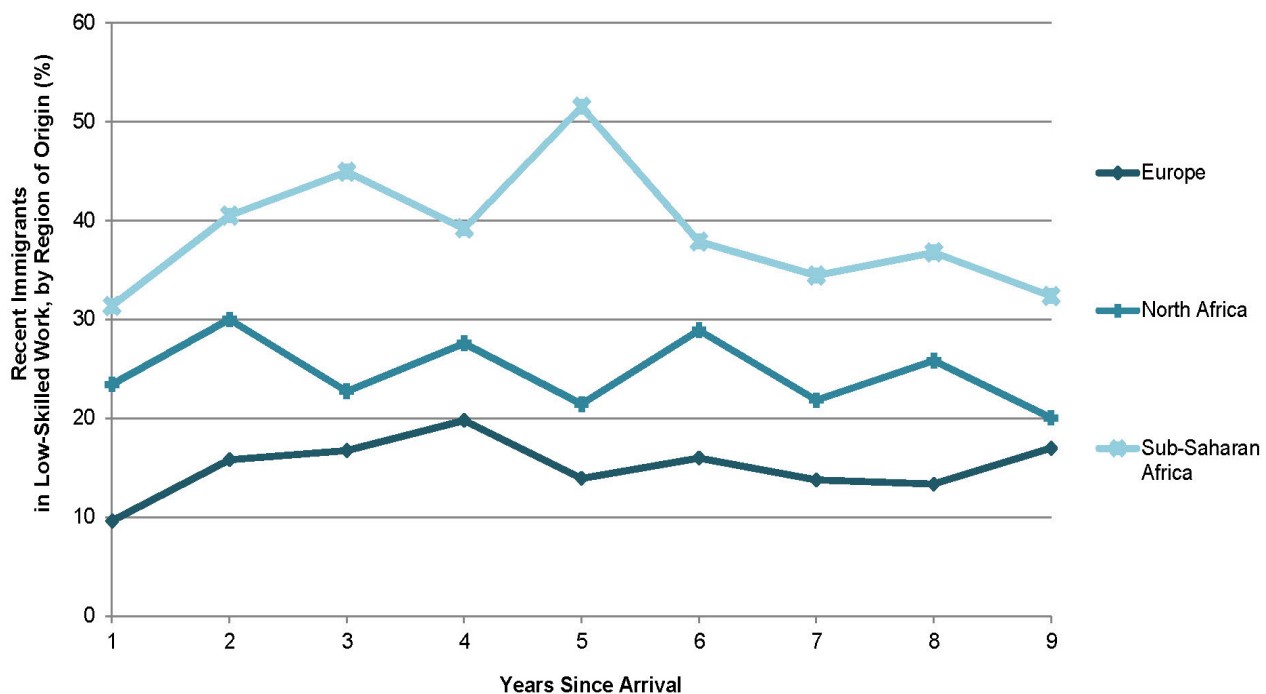


**Figure 15. Share of Immigrants Arriving 2000-08 in Low-Skilled Work, by Level of Education and Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

**Figure 16. Share of Immigrants Arriving 2000-08 in Low-Skilled Work, by Origin and Years Since Arrival**



Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

## F. Sectors of Employment

Immigrants in France tend to be clustered in specific sectors of the labor market: mainly construction; services; transport; and retail, accommodation, and food. In the 1960s and 1970s, immigrants were highly represented in the manufacturing sector. But deindustrialization has dramatically changed the role of this sector: sharp downsizing of the workforce combined with the need for more highly qualified workers resulted in the substitution of the immigrant workforce with natives. Immigrants are now underrepresented in this sector, a trend that prevails for new arrivals.

The distribution of new immigrants across sectors does not differ greatly from longer-term immigrants.<sup>21</sup> The main exception to this is the “professional, scientific, technical, service support activities” sector, which attracts more new immigrants than immigrants generally, and more immigrants than natives. Since this sector includes workers employed through temporary work agencies, this might reflect a tendency toward employing new immigrants on temporary contracts (see Table 2). By contrast, new arrivals are less likely to work in the public administration, education, and social work sectors; a sector that attracts some of the most secure, permanent jobs. While immigrants are often underrepresented in the public sector, this trend may be exacerbated in France by the fact that foreign nationals are debarred from certain public sector roles.

Low-skilled jobs comprised approximately 10 percent of the workforce in 2009-11, and were mostly located in the services and public administration, education, and social work sectors. The highest share of low-skilled jobs was in the real-estate activities sector, but this sector employed less than 1 percent of the total workforce.

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### *Variations in concentrations of immigrants from different origins by sector reflect the ethnic segmentation of France's labor market.*

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Highly skilled new immigrants are overrepresented in manufacturing, financial services, information and communication, and public administration—but they also find jobs in the sectors with a lower average qualification level. For example, they tend to be largely overqualified<sup>22</sup> in construction (72 percent of the highly educated working in this sector are overqualified), trade and food industry (in which 70 percent are overqualified), and other services (50 percent are overqualified). The mismatch between immigrants' qualifications and the type of jobs they occupy is wider in these sectors. Conversely, the support services activities sector seems to employ highly educated new immigrants in a manner more in line with their skills.

Variations in concentrations of immigrants from different origins by sector reflect the ethnic segmentation of France's labor market. European immigrants tend to work in construction as well as in administration and other services, whereas North Africans are concentrated in trade and service support activities. Sub-Saharan Africans show the highest concentration in a small number of sectors: accommodation and food industry, the “other services” sector (a miscellaneous category that includes occupations such as laundry services, hairdressing, and computer repair), service support activities, and administration. They are more likely to fill low-skilled positions in these sectors: 17 percent of jobs in the service support activities sector are low-skilled, 40 percent of new immigrants working in this sector have low-skilled jobs, and North Africans comprise 51 percent of new immigrants who fall in this category.

Gender is also associated with varying concentrations by sector. While rarely employed in the construction sector, women are largely overrepresented in administration and other services.

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21 Due to a change in the nomenclature of sectors of employment in 2008, the series has been discontinued and we cannot follow the type of sectors for the cohorts.

22 Overqualification is estimated by comparing the credentials (such as the highest-level diploma) of the individual and the formal qualifications required for the job. Hence a person will be considered overqualified if they have an occupation below their skill level.

**Table 2. Natives and Immigrants in Sectors of Employment, 2009-11 (%)**

	Natives	Immigrants	Immigrants Arrived Since 2000	Workers in Low-Skilled Jobs	Immigrant Workers
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	3.2	1.1	1.5	1.3	3.6
Manufacturing, Mining, and Energy Supply	14.4	10.4	9.9	3.9	6.6
Construction	6.4	13.3	13.8	2.7	15.7
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Transportation, Accommodation and Food	21.2	23.5	22.8	5.5	9.3
Information and Communication	2.9	2.7	3.5	0.5	8.4
Financial and Insurance Activities	3.5	2	1.8	1.4	4.7
Real Estate Activities	1.2	1.8	0.8	24.4	10.9
Professional, Scientific, Technical, Service Support Activities	9.9	14.9	19.6	16.6	12.1
Public Administration, Education, Social work	31.1	18.5	14.9	12.2	5.3
Other Services	5.9	11.6	11.2	28.6	14.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>8.5</b>

Note: Low-skilled jobs are defined as International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) code 9: Elementary Occupations. "Elementary occupations consist of simple and routine tasks which mainly require the use of hand-held tools and often some physical effort." See International Labor Organization, "Major Group 9: Elementary Occupations," September 18, 2004, [www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco88/9.htm](http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/isco/isco88/9.htm).

Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

**Table 3. Employment Sectors of Immigrants to France Arriving 2000 and After by Origin and Gender, 2009-11 (%)**

	All Immigrants	Europe	North Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Men	Women
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	1.5	1.7	1.9	0.9	1.8	1.0
Manufacturing, Mining, and Energy Supply	9.9	10.3	12.0	6.8	11.9	7.0
Construction	13.8	18.7	10.8	6.6	22.3	1.5
Wholesale and Retail Trade, Transportation, Accommodation and Food	22.8	16.1	29.2	24.2	24.2	20.7
Information and Communication	3.5	4.0	3.1	3.1	3.6	3.5
Financial and Insurance Activities	1.8	2.7	1.1	1.1	1.6	2.1
Real Estate Activities	0.8	1.5	0.5	0.5	0.9	0.7
Professional, Scientific, Technical, Service Support Activities	19.6	15.8	22.7	25.5	20.7	18.0
Public Administration, Education, Social work	14.9	15.4	12.6	17.7	8.2	24.6
Other Services	11.2	13.5	6.0	13.4	4.6	20.7

Source: Authors' analysis based on French Labor Force Survey, pooled datasets 2003-11.

## IV. Conclusions

New immigrants have very low employment rates the year they arrive in France. Since most of them are not admitted as labor migrants, they need time to adjust to the French labor market and acquire host-country human capital. This applies to women especially, who are more likely to be inactive in the labor market than men. But male immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa also face high levels of unemployment during their first years in France. While the first two years appear to be critical in terms of access to stable jobs, new immigrants often do not experience significant improvements in their situation after the fourth year. Their rates of unemployment largely stay above the average among natives. Moreover, new immigrants who are in employment often tend to be working in substandard jobs, and women are particularly likely to have part-time work as well as fixed and temporary contracts.

In addition, overqualification is widespread, especially among North African and sub-Saharan African migrants. From 2003 to 2011, it ranged from 39 percent on average among all new immigrants (compared to 20 percent for natives and 32 percent for long-established immigrants) to 55 percent for newly arrived North Africans and 61 percent for newly arrived sub-Saharan Africans. Indeed, in 2009-11, new immigrants from North and sub-Saharan Africa tended to be clustered in low-skilled activities across most of the sectors.

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*Even after a decade in France, new immigrants are still  
highly vulnerable on the labor market.*

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In fact, even after a decade in France, new immigrants are still highly vulnerable on the labor market. Several underlying factors may explain this situation. The return on qualifications for recent immigrants is lower than expected, and the situation of those with minimal credentials remains unstable. Gaps by gender and country of origin reflect a structural disadvantage for women—explanations for this include cultural norms among North African and sub-Saharan African groups as well as discrimination against them. The organization of the French labor market, including ongoing discrimination and the relative lack of (or failure of) specific schemes dedicated to immigrant incorporation into the labor market, also hinder the potential progress of new immigrants when their capabilities improve over time.





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